

## AUDIO DVD GUIDELINES 2007-2008

All testing staff administering the tests to students scheduled to test with audio DVDs must read these guidelines, in addition to the *Supervisor's Manual of Instructions*, before test day.

All students approved by ACT for this accommodation will be identified as Timing Code 3—Triple Time (and up to 3 hours for the English Test). Do not administer the tests on audio DVD to students with any other timing code.

### Important Notes:

- These **audio DVDs** are an **alternative** to audiocassettes. Students will be able to replay specific portions of the tests more easily using the “next track” and “previous track” buttons than on audiocassettes, which have only “fast forward and “rewind.”
- What displays on the screen will vary depending on the controls, menu, and toolbar used by the software program you have chosen. Students must use individual headphones and select their own volume levels.
- For some testing programs, the Writing Test will be on a fifth disc; otherwise you will have four discs—one for each of the four multiple-choice tests. Students must receive only one disc at a time. All students begin each test at the same time.
- If the Writing Test is not contained on your DVDs, it may be read verbatim from the test booklet to the examinee(s), but be sure to return the test booklet to the examinee after you have read the directions and the prompts. Only the examinee may break the seal.
- Track listings have been provided in addition to these guidelines in case you need to assist students with navigating through the tests, should they become lost or need to replay a prior portion of the test they are working on.
- ACT recommends that you use a proctor for group administrations to more than ten examinees.

### Before Test Day

- Work with your school's technical support person to determine what software and equipment you will use. Become familiar with how the DVDs work on the software and playback device you will use so you may efficiently assist examinees as needed.
- You are permitted, along with your technical support person, to check the DVDs before test day to make sure they will work properly. Report any defective discs or problems with playback to ACT Special Testing **immediately**.
- We have enclosed track listings for use only by the room supervisor and proctors to assist students who have navigation or playback problems. They tell you what “chapter” or “track” students need to go to in order to replay the desired portion of the test. See “How the Audio DVDs Work” for more information.
- Before test day, become familiar with the controls the software program you have chosen uses and how to instruct students on test day, since not all software programs work the same way. We encourage you to try navigating through the items and responses yourself. If you have any concerns, check with your technical support person. If that doesn't resolve the issue, you or your technical support person should contact ACT Special Testing **before** test day.

## How the Audio DVDs Work

- Each test is broken down into a series of “tracks” or “chapters.” Each question is on its own track and the set of response choices is on another track. Transitional information between questions is on a separate track. If there is an introduction or introductory passage preceding a set of linked questions, it is on a separate track.
- Passages with multiple paragraphs are broken into individual tracks—one track for each paragraph.
- Due to the large number of tracks, the chapters are grouped into “titles.” Each title contains up to 99 chapters.
- The directions that precede each test are contained on a separate track. Before the English test, there are additional tracks that provide guidelines and directions that apply to all four tests.
- The screen will be black while the discs play, except for any controls, menus, or images displayed by the software program.
- The discs auto-advance through the chapters. Once a chapter/track is done, the DVD automatically goes to the next track. If the disc has reached the end of a “title,” the disc automatically proceeds to the first chapter in the next title.
- The discs will stop automatically at the end of each test.
- At any time, students may use the “previous track” button to return to a track they want to hear again (for example, a section of the passage or a set of response choices). They may also use the “next track” button to return to the question they were working on. The track listings will help you if a student is not sure how to get back to a particular track. The student may need to press the button more than once to get to the desired track.
- Alternatively, the student may “fast forward” or “rewind,” as on audiocassettes, but this is recommended only if students have gone far back in the test; for example, if they wanted to check their work on an earlier item before time is called.
- If a student presses “pause,” the DVD will pause until the student presses “play” or on some programs, “resume.” The DVD will play from the point the student paused the disc.
- If a student presses “stop,” the result depends on the software you are using. On some programs, you may “resume” or “play” from where you stopped, but if you press stop TWICE, the disc will start from the beginning. On other programs, the disc actually stops and starts over at the beginning. You may use your track listings to help students to find the track they were working on before they hit “stop.”
- See the “Software” section for more information.

## Equipment Required:

- You may use either stand-alone DVD players or a DVD-ROM drive in a computer. ACT has no specific hardware requirements. The DVDs will not play in a CD-ROM drive. Make sure you have enough memory installed and your playback devices are connected properly on each machine you plan to use. If you choose to use stand-alone players, make sure the discs will play on them and that students are shown how to use the controls. You will want to make sure no other programs are open, as this may cause playback to be choppy or skip.
- Each student must be able to control the progress of his/her own player, use his/her own headphones, and begin each test at the same time. Provide assistance from your track listings only if students make a mistake or have trouble finding the desired track. You are **not** permitted to play the DVDs on one player to a group.
- Please check with your technical support person on the best software to use.
- “Codecs”: This is a term you may see in an error message or hear from your technical support person. Most files on DVDs, whether audio or video, require a decoding program or “codec” to get past the encryption program that prevents copying. There are programs

available for free download, that have a variety of codecs available, but different codecs will work on different types of files.

- If you receive a “codec error” message, check with your technical support person to make sure you have the most updated form of the software you are using and have downloaded all available codecs for that program. If you download too many codecs, playback may be choppy.
- “Skin”: Your technical support person may use this term. It refers to how the controls are displayed, background image, and “frame” around the screen. The “skin” is a product of the software you use. If you want to have only certain controls displayed (for example, removing the Stop button) or wish to change how they show on the screen, your technical support person can assist you with those changes.

Below is a list of programs and what we know about them. The list is not all-inclusive.

- **VLC Media Player:** This is the program we recommend you try first. It is a free download from <http://www.videolan.org/vlc>. To play the DVDs, go to the top toolbar, select “File” and “Open” to open the disc. When the menu appears, select the DVD radio button, not DVD (menus). The DVD will automatically begin playing. Students may use “next track” and “previous track,” which are located at the bottom right of the display. It may be necessary to adjust the size of the display screen to get these controls to appear. Students can also access “next chapter” and “previous chapter” from the “Navigation” tab on the top toolbar. Students can also use “fast forward” and “rewind,” and there is a button at the bottom that moves as the DVD plays that students can use as a fast forward/rewind control. The only caveat is when students reach Chapter 99 on a title, they cannot hit next track to get to the next title; they must wait for it to auto-advance. Conversely, if they are on Chapter 1 of Title 2, they cannot hit previous track to get back to Title 1, Chapter 99. The controls stay on the screen while the disc plays and the “Navigation” tab on the top toolbar will allow students to select a particular title and chapter, and show what title and chapter students are on. Past Chapter 34, students will need to scroll down the menu to see where they are at. This menu can help students who want to replay a certain question or check their work before time is called. Use your track listings to guide students to the right track.
- **Win DVD:** You should not run into any codec problems here, as this program is designed to play DVDs. Win DVD will display controls such as “previous track,” “next track,” “fast forward,” and “rewind.” It also has a control module that stays on the screen as the DVD plays that shows what title and chapter the DVD is currently playing and students may use the console to select a particular title and chapter.
- **Windows Media Player:** We recommend this program only if you already have the separate plug-in that must be purchased in order to play the type of media files on ACT Audio DVDs. If you have the plug-in, the DVDs will work, but if you do not, we recommend you try an alternate program.
- **MS Media Player:** You will likely run into the same issue as with Windows Media Player.
- **Power DVD:** Recommended with caution. This software comes installed on Dell computers and will launch and begin playback automatically after students insert the disc into the drive. Power DVD will work acceptably, with the following caveats. First, the controls do not stay up on the screen as the DVD plays. Students have to move the mouse to get the controls to reappear. Students won’t be able to see what title they are and the chapter number will only display if they hit the “next track” or “previous track” buttons. This could be confusing. Finally, sometimes the disc may “freeze” or appear to stop playing or playback can be choppy, making the disc sound as if it has skipped. It may be necessary to close out of the software and restart in order to play the disc

properly, should these issues occur. Note that if you use an alternate program, you will need to have your technical support person adjust your computer's settings so that Power DVD is not the default program; otherwise, it will launch automatically as soon as you insert the disc into the drive even if you try to open the discs with another program.

- **Dell Direct:** This is Dell's replacement for Power DVD. We understand from the vendor that it has the same issue with not showing the controls as Power DVD does.
- **Other software:** If you are using another program, make sure you have checked the DVDs on it with your technical support person. If you run into any problems, try using VLC or contact customer support for the program before notifying ACT. It is most likely an issue with the program itself rather than with the discs.
- **Stand-alone player:** If you choose to use stand-alone DVD players, either provided by your institution or by individual students, make sure that the discs play on the player and students know how to use the controls.

### Troubleshooting:

- If the discs do not play automatically when you insert them into the player, try launching the program first. Select "File" on the toolbar, then select "Open" and choose the drive that contains the disc.
- If the discs still do not play, check to see if you have any error messages, or refer to the "Help" menu. Try rebooting the player and reinserting the discs. As a last resort, try rebooting the computer. If the discs still will not play, call ACT Special Testing.
- If you believe the discs have skipped, try replaying the previous track and letting it auto-advance while you follow along with the test booklet. Close all other programs you may have running and try replaying the disc. If a disc does skip, try cleaning the discs by wiping with the grain using a clean rag and glass cleaner. Check to see if they are scratched. If you have a defective disc, notify ACT Special Testing **immediately**.
- If playback is choppy and/or appears to cut off words, check to make sure you haven't tried to install too many codecs and close any other programs that may be running. Replay the tracks in question to make sure. Sometimes when you hit "next track" or "previous track" while a track is playing, you may hear an "echo" from that track that does not affect the playback of the track you go to next. It may be a software issue, and keep in mind that students receive a test booklet to follow along with the discs.
- If you run into any issues not mentioned above, check with your technical support person. If that does not resolve the issue, call ACT Special Testing.
- If a student gets "lost" in the navigation, use the track listings, but keep in mind that students have Triple Time, including up to 3 hours for the English Test. Students will also be following along with the test booklet.